

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
GM Lordstown Project

Personal Experiences
O.H. 2033

Dave Dunbar
Interviewed
By
Tracy Direnzo
On
March 12, 2002

ARCHIVE
Oral
History
2033

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INTERVIEWEE: Dave Dunbar
INTERVIEWER: Tracy Dizenzo
SUBJECT: GM Lordstown Project
DATE: March 12, 2002

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This is an interview with Dave Dunbar concerning GM Lordstown Project for Youngstown State University's Oral History Program. This interview was conducted by Tracy Dizenzo on March 12, 2002.

TD: Dave thank you for being here and allowing me to interview you today. I'll just start out by asking you, well tell me where you grew up and about the area.

DD: I grew up in Niles, Ohio. It was a small area I guess. There were a couple of steel mills.

TD: Where did you go to high school?

DD: I went Niles McKinley High School.

TD: All through high school?

DD: Yeah, well I quit the first week of 12th grade.

TD: Okay, what was it like in Niles?

DD: Well it was normal I guess. There were just a whole bunch of kids running around, everything was the same as anywhere else.

TD: How would you describe their schools?

DD: They have a good school system. I could have probably done more if I had stayed.

TD: Did you grow up in the same home, or did you move around a lot?

DD: I moved once while I was in school.

TD: So you stayed in Niles?

DD: Yeah.

TD: What did your parents do for a living?

DD: Well my dad had a lot of different jobs. He worked for the city for a while, he worked for an oil company for a while and then he was laid off. He didn't do much after that, he started getting social security. My mom worked as a matron to the schools.

TD: What is that?

DD: She was a cleaning lady.

TD: Okay. After you got out of school, what was your first job that you had?

DD: I worked for Niles Vault.

TD: What did you do there?

DD: We made vaults that they used for burials. We finished them and put them in the cemetery.

TD: Did you like it?

DD: It was okay, it was a good job. It was good money at that time.

TD: Excuse me?

DD: It was good money, at that time it was. I made a buck and a half an hour, I think it was. Back then that was a lot of money.

TD: How old were you?

DD: I was eighteen when I started working.

TD: Was it labor-intensive or was it just kind of easy doing the job? Was it difficult?

DD: Oh it was difficult at times, it was heavy labor. We had to push vaults around in buggies in the cemetery in any kind of weather.

TD: Oh really. How long did you work there?

DD: I worked Niles Vault from 1958- 1966 and then I left there and I went to Fithians in Youngstown and I worked there until 1970, from 1966-1970. Then I went to GM.

TD: Okay. Was the second one in Youngstown was it the same thing?

DD: Yeah, it was the same thing, the same deal. It was the same kind of work.

TD: Did it have benefits and stuff like that?

DD: Yeah I had insurance when I worked there. I had more than I had at Niles.

TD: So it was a pretty good job?

DD: Yeah.

TD: What made you leave that job?

DD: Well General Motors was something big, everybody was talking about it, saying that there was good money out there, good benefits. I figured I'd give it a try.

TD: Did it turn out to be better?

DD: Yeah. It was much better.

TD: So what year was that that you got hired at General Motors?

DD: It was 1970.

TD: 1970, how old would that have made you then?

DD: I started one month before I turned thirty.

TD: Okay, how did you get a job out at General Motors?

DD: I put in an application. A guy I worked with, his brother was a foreman up there so he got us some applications and then they called.

TD: Was it very difficult to get a job there?

DD: No, not at that time. They were hiring quite a few people.

TD: What was the first job that you held at General Motors?

DD: Well I was working on the line. I put the rubber seals around the doors.

TD: Oh really, like the rubber strips?

DD: Yeah. They went right on the door then. The guy before me would glue the door, and I'd put the rubber on it and roll it and then we would cut them at the bottom. That is not how they are now, they are already the size that they need to be and you just put them on.

TD: You mean it outlined the inside? It is kind of hard to explain.

DD: On the inside of the door, on the lip inside the door, it went right in there, all the way around.

TD: Okay, that is what I am doing right now, it is pretty easy.

DD: Well yours is on a lift now. Well mine wasn't, you just put it on the edge of the door and ran it around. We had to roll it with a roller until the glue would take it.

TD: Was it difficult?

DD: Yeah, well it wasn't difficult but it was an awkward job for me. I am tall and I had to be bending down all of the time.

TD: Oh really?

DD: Yeah because I had to get down on the bottom of the doors.

TD: They didn't make accommodations for taller people to be on taller jobs?

DD: No.

TD: Did you find it difficult to adjust to assembly line work?

DD: Yeah it was a little bit more awkward than the job that I had before. With the assembly line you had to be there all of the time. The only time you got off was if you needed an E break or lunch.

TD: What was the car they built when you first started?

DD: When I started out there was a van plant. They had just opened a new plant. We built the Chevy vans, that was when they had just built the new plant and stuff.

TD: So you started in the van plant?

DD: Yeah.

TD: Okay, what was it like in the van plant?

DD: Well it was different.

TD: It was different?

DD: Well I don't know there were just so many people there. Then I don't even know how many people there were there, there were quite a few. I worked on the second floor. We had to park by the car plant and we took the walkway over. They put up scaffolding along side the building with a roof over it and we had to go through all of that and then we had to go along the backside of the car plant and walk across a field to the van plant.

TD: Is the actual shell of the van plant still there or did they tear it down?

DD: No they tore it down finally. Once they closed it in 1992 then they had to wait a couple of years before they were allowed to tear it down.

TD: Where was it?

DD: It was back behind the car plant.

TD: Just right behind it?

DD: Well, yeah pretty much right behind it on the lower end towards 45.

TD: Okay.

DD: In fact they still use the parking lot and stuff for the cars now. The parking lot that goes all of the way out to Hallock Young that used to be the truck plant. "Parking Lot."

TD: Oh really?

DD: Do you know where that traffic light is there coming off of 45, that first light? The second light, that's where the turnpike is. That is where we used to be.

TD: It was right there then, it's not like it was far away. It was right there.

DD: Yeah it was about four or five hundred feet behind the car plant.

TD: Did you like the vans that they were making?

DD: Yeah, they were nice. I even test drove a couple of them a couple of times. They used to let employees test drive them and take them home at night. They could drive them, see what they could find wrong with them and stuff. They could tell what they thought of them.

TD: How did you feel about them?

DD: I thought they were good trucks. I found a few things wrong with them; I was a repairman at that time. When I drove them I knew what to look for. It makes it a little easier to find something wrong.

TD: Describe a typical day at General Motors when you first started. What was it like from punch in to punch out?

DD: Well it was steady work up until lunchtime, and then we got a lunch hour or a half hour. Other than that you were on the line the whole time unless you needed an E break then the head coordinators would come around and give you an E break. Other than that you pushed the line all day.

TD: About how many vans did you make an hour, do you know? Or even in a day?

DD: I think when we started they were making twenty-eight an hour.

TD: So it obviously took a lot longer to make a van than a car.

DD: Yeah well they are so much larger. They couldn't run the line too fast because of the size of the trucks.

TD: What shift did you work?

DD: I worked second shift.

TD: Did you like it?

DD: Yeah I liked second shift. It was good for me at the time. I had horses at my home and it gave me time to work with them.

TD: What was the line speed like?

DD: When I started out I think it was twenty-eight an hour.

TD: Did you find it difficult to keep up?

DD: No. In fact people from the car plant would come over and they thought the line was stopped, because it was going so slow. They ran like eighty-five an hour over there at that time.

TD: Okay yeah that would be a lot different. How did your job work were you tied to a certain station or were you able to work up the line? How did that work?

DD: No that first job I did we had to stay right there in the station because we couldn't pass up the guy ahead of me to put the glue on. I had to wait for him to get his job done before I could start mine.

TD: What are some things that you would do to pass the time? Or did you have time to do anything?

DD: Not much, at lunchtime you would sit down and eat your lunch and talk to the people around you.

TD: Were you able to socialize while you were working?

DD: You could with the people who were close to you. The people who worked on the other side of the line or right in front or right in back. Other than that you didn't have much time for anything. It was a busy job at the time, especially when I first started because I was getting used to it and everything. I was getting used to the pace.

TD: Did you find yourself in the hole a lot at first?

DD: Yeah, at first. I was sore a lot then.

TD: Once you get that rhythm then you can do it all right but you have to catch that rhythm.

DD: Yeah, once you get that rhythm and get yourself going and get used to what you are doing, then you can cut the time down that it took you to do the job.

TD: Were you allowed to listen to the radio or anything like that, or did they forbid that?

DD: I don't know I never listened to the radio that much, I never really noticed anyone; I don't think we had much time to fool with the radio. Later on down the road they brought them in.

TD: What about you or anyone around you, did you ever notice if anyone or you yourself had time to read the newspaper while you were working?

DD: At my job, no. At some of the other jobs, maybe. There were some assembly line jobs that were off and on and they could do stuff like that. Most of the people on the line didn't have much time to do stuff like that.

TD: Did they look down on the people who would read the paper at work or anything? Did they try to restrict it?

DD: No, not really as long as they got their jobs done. They didn't bother them too much. But then when it came time to add work or something they would look at the people who had time to read on their jobs.

TD: Explain the interaction that you had with your co-workers outside of work.

DD: It wasn't too much. The first couple of years I was there we played ball. We had softball teams and stuff like that. Sometimes we would go out in the parking lot and have a beer.

TD: It was a team that GM sponsored?

DD: Union.

TD: It was union sponsored?

DD: Yeah. We played on union teams.

TD: So was it like a pick-up league? Was it actually in a league?

DD: Yeah we had our own league. It was all GM workers from the car plant and the Fab plant and the van plant.

TD: Oh so it was just a GM league? You didn't go against other.....

DD: No, it was all UAW. It was all UAW members.

TD: Okay. How was that?

DD: It was a lot of fun. I like to play ball.

TD: Do they still do things like that?

DD: Yeah they still have ball teams, I don't know if they still have a big league or not. I know they still have ball teams because they go to tournaments and everything. A lot of the guys I used to play with are still playing. Some of the younger guys I used to play with are still playing. Then we had bowling leagues, I did that.

TD: How has safety changed since the time that you started there to the present time?

DD: Well it has gotten a lot better. I think that GM is very concerned about it because it costs them a lot of money when you get hurt. Then they have to pay a lot of insurance and all of the penalties and stuff for people getting hurt. They give you more protection, like more clothing and eyeglasses that we didn't have when we first started. People just seem to be more appreciative on the safety part of it now.

TD: Do you feel that safety was an issue back in 1970, or in the early seventies when you started? Do you feel that they looked at it as an issue?

DD: Yeah, but not as strongly as they do now, they were just interested in getting their product going, because it was new and everything and they wanted to get it out into the public.

TD: Why do you think that attitude has changed?

DD: Probably because it cost them a lot of money. They get fined if they have too many problems in the plant. The government comes down on them for it, there are big penalties. That is one of things they stress now, keep the safety problem down, people getting hurt, scrapes, strains, cuts, stuff like that.

TD: Did you ever feel that you were in any real danger in your job?

DD: No, not really.

TD: Or any of the jobs that you had?

DD: Well, no there was not a lot of danger, no. You just had to use common sense and watch yourself and not do anything stupid. You know you hurt yourself, they don't hurt you, you hurt yourself by doing stuff that you're not supposed to be doing, or being in too big of a hurry.

TD: Was there a lot of machinery, like forklifts and stuff when you first started too?

DD: The forklifts and stuff were there, yeah. The machinery, no there wasn't a whole lot of machinery, it was mostly all people on the line doing the jobs. We didn't really have any machines to work with.

TD: When did you transfer over to the car plant?

DD: Let's see in 1979, when they cut it down to one shift and I was transferred over to the car plant. I stayed there for two-two and a half years and then I went back to the truck plant. Then the line speed went back up.

TD: Which one did you like better?

DD: I was used to the truck plant so I liked it better. Now that I've been in the car plant for a while, it is really the same thing. It is a little bit more hectic and the speed of the line is different. It makes your work attitude a lot different because you just want to hurry up.

TD: Was it in the mid-seventies when women started to come into the plant?

DD: Let's see, 1970 actually, they started coming in. In July or August, somewhere in that area they started coming into the plants.

TD: Do you feel that there were any big changes in adjusting to women working in the factory?

DD: Yeah, some people didn't but a lot of us did.

TD: How?

DD: The way that you acted around them, the way you talked. A lot of the guys didn't care it was the normal way they spoke anyhow. Then it made a lot of hard feelings for a lot of the guys because the women would always get the easier jobs. They had jobs that they thought women couldn't do and then they would give men the harder jobs. Now it is equal relations, they put the jobs up for bid and you can bid on them, seniority gets them now. They can't just give it to anybody.

TD: When did they start doing that?

DD: You didn't hear too much about it in the truck plant but when we came to the car plant it was that way. In the truck plant you would just hear by word that there was a job opening and you wanted it you would tell somebody. If you had seniority they'd give it to you. If it was on your line and you wanted it, you usually got it before somebody else on one of the other lines. They wanted to keep people who knew the job there.

TD: Did you move around from job to job a lot?

DD: In the truck plant I worked on the line for about two weeks and then I got a relief job and at that time you had seven people in your group. The oldest person got the relief job, to give the breaks and stuff. So I got that and I was there for I doubt it was a year. Then my relief man he got his seniority back from GM and then he went down to final process as a repairman. So then I got the relief job. I stayed on that until 1978. No, 1974, because in '74 I took the repairman job and I stayed on that until 1978 and I got reduced down to an ARO and I got put on day turn. I stayed on day turn for a couple of years and then I went back to nights. Well they had me in the car plant from '79-81. From 1979-81 they had me on day turn and then I wanted to go back to the truck plant, because they had me in the body shop at the car plant and I didn't want to be in there. So then I put in to go back across and I went back to the truck plant in 1981 or '82. I stayed there until they closed in 1992.

TD: So did you try as hard as you could to get the jobs that were off of the lines, or at least not on the lines all of the time?

DD: Everybody tried that. Everybody wanted the sub-assembly jobs because they could work ahead and make rest time for themselves. I usually stayed on the line though. I didn't usually get any of the easier ones.

TD: What job do you do now?

DD: I do sunroof assists.

TD: So you are on the line right now?

DD: Yeah.

TD: Do you like being on the line?

DD: Yeah, I do. Right now I could have another job because of seniority, but I want to have control of me. I don't want GM to have control of where and when I work. If I was on one of those other jobs that you bid by seniority then I could end up on B crew or A crew and some of the older men could bump me and then I would have to change shifts and I don't want that. I stay where I know I can control where I'm at.

TD: So what do you mean by having control? If you are a coordinator are you not as in control or in charge of what you do?

DD: Well being a coordinator they could send you out of the line and make you fix repairs or anything like that. If you don't have seniority someone could bump you and make you go to another shift. On my job with my seniority, nobody on those jobs has more seniority than me. So I don't have to worry about being bumped. They can't make me go chase anything down the line because I have to do my job. So I have control of where I'm at and what I do.

TD: So you would rather just be in your spot, doing your thing?

DD: Right.

TD: And knowing exactly where you have to go?

DD: Right I don't like them having control of what I'm doing. I have control of my job. I get to do what I want. As long as I get my job done, they don't bother me.

TD: How do you feel race relations are in the plant or at least how they have been in the past?

DD: They were a little strong in the past. I had a lot of friends that were black and stuff out there. You were real friendly if a few of us were together, but if you get a group of them they might snub you. We had some problems in the truck plant, they sort of had their own group and you didn't bother them. It has changed quite a bit over the years. It is not as much that way now. We seem to be more interactive with everyone.

TD: Do you think that there was ever any preferential treatment in any way?

DD: No because of the way it was set up with seniority control and everything.

TD: Okay.

DD: Management had some problems with that because they came in and said that they had to have so many minorities and they came in a pulled jobs and stuff. So they made them do stuff like that. Actually on the line they can't do it anymore. When the women first came in there was a lot of that going on with the women? They were given the better jobs because they knew they could do them and the men got the harder jobs. That has changed too because of the seniority rights and everything. They put the jobs up for bid and seniority gets it.

TD: Do you think the men resented that?

DD: At the time, yeah quite a few of them did. I even did sometimes probably.

TD: Have you ever noticed any issues of sexual harassment? I know that has just come about in the past few years?

DD: I don't know there have been a lot of people charged with it over the years. It is usually because somebody got mad. Usually they all interacted together quite a bit. You might get a woman who didn't like you swearing around her or something. The guys didn't care because it was shoptalk to them. If you didn't like it, don't be around them. Anymore you have to watch what you do and what you say to anybody. Or else they'll jump right on the bandwagon and get you.

TD: How do you feel men and women work together at the factory? Do you feel that it's more difficult to work together or do you think that it is just like working with a guy?

DD: It is just like working with the guys. We are all used to being there and everybody gets along. You get some that don't want to work and that goes with the area. Some do, some don't, but it is that same way with the guys. We have a lot of guys who are the same way. I've never had any problem working with the women.

TD: Do you feel that women should be allowed to work like that in a factory or do you think that is men's work?

DD: Well, actually I didn't like it when they first came in. I didn't think it was the place for a woman, I thought she should be home with her family. I think that it has caused a lot of problems in a lot of families with the woman and the man both working, as far as kids go and stuff. I don't have a problem with them now in the plants as long as they do their job.

TD: Okay let me switch directions a little bit, how do you feel about the increased role of robots in the plant over the years.

DD: I don't like it; it costs a lot of jobs. It is backfiring in their faces because a lot of them didn't work out.

TD: Oh really? How, what happened?

DD: A lot of the robots in the body shop; they had a lot of trouble with them. When they went down they only had a couple of mechanics. If there weren't any people there to do the jobs that the robots were doing, they were in trouble. So they took a lot of them back out and put people back in. They are still taking the people back out again. They are putting the robots where they work better and everything, but you still have to have somebody there to repair them or take care of what they are doing if one breaks down.

TD: Where did they get the robots? Did they make them or did they buy them from someplace?

DD: I think the ones that they put in the body shop they got from another plant that they were trying them at. I don't know where they get them or anything. They don't make them there, so they must buy them from someplace.

TD: Do you feel that a lot of the workers resent them for bringing in a robot to replace the jobs?

DD: Sure, yeah, when one of your friends have been laid off or you lost your job, well yeah the plant is going to have some hard feeling about it but then again people lose their jobs all of the time. So there are all kinds of hard feelings out there about that all of the time.

TD: Looking from a management point of view, do you feel that they are justified in doing that?

DD: Well to them they are because they are there to make money. If they can cut out people and put in robots, it saves them a lot of money. Then they don't have to pay all of the wages and the benefits and everything. So their view of it is that it is helping them. that is what they are there for, they are in business to make money. The more they can make the better they like it.

TD: Do you feel and I've heard this from a lot of people that a person working out at GM doesn't deserve the money that they get? Do you feel that GM workers deserve the money that they get?

DD: I think they do.

TD: Why?

DD: The time they put in, working on a cement floor all of the time, chasing that line all day. People who talk that way should come in and work in the plant for a while. That might make a difference in their attitude or opinion of it.

TD: Do you think a lot of people couldn't handle working on an assembly line?

DD: I don't think some of them could.

TD: It is not as easy as people think, huh?

DD: No. You have to have the attitude that you are going to come in there and do the job, if you come in there thinking that you just have a job, I don't care if I do it or not, just give me the money. Which it happens a lot, especially with a lot of the young kids that they have hired in, their parents are committee people or have influence, and they have the attitude that they don't have to work to make money. We get a lot of that problem.

TD: Do you think that they handle those problems well in management and in the union? Do you think that they handle those problems well with someone who comes in and let's say they might have a powerful father or something, are they able to handle that or can't they?

DD: Well, I don't know some of the kids are pampered too much because people who are in authority are their parents. They'll let them get away with a lot more than a regular person who comes in there just wanting a job. It bothers a lot of people to see that happen. You get new hires who walk around and do nothing or they have a real easy job. They might even get appointed a job from the union if they are new hires. It makes the older people look down on the union for that because you'd think that the seniority group would do something like that. Both sides it is hard, it makes bad attitudes for a lot of people.

TD: How do you feel the treatment by management has changed over the years towards the workers?

DD: I don't think it has changed very much. They keep saying that they want to be our friends and be a big team and everything and it's fine as long as things are going their way. As soon as things don't go their way, it's back to the old way of screaming at you and demanding stuff and everything else. Overall I think it has gotten worse. The attitudes of the foremen and stuff, yeah. Now they are hiring a lot of young people who don't know anything about the plant. Maybe they have worked there for six months and now they are a foreman and they think they know everything. Look at me I've got thirty-two years in and a guy who has six months in comes down and tells me that I'm doing my job wrong. I know he's wrong, he knows he's wrong, but it is his attitude that he has authority over me and he can make me do what he wants me to. That makes a lot of hard feelings between the people and the foreman like that.

TD: Do you feel that a person should have to work on the assembly line before they should be allowed to be a foreman?

DD: I think it would give them a better look at what is going on in the plant and how they should treat people. If they would actually be on the job themselves. As long as they have the education to be a foreman, then why not, let them be a foreman, but they

have to learn how to be a foreman once they get into the plant. It is easy to get the education and everything and say that I know what I'm doing but then to actually come in and do it, that's a little bit harder.

TD: I think it would be better for them to learn by experience rather than just having a degree that qualifies them.

DD: I think that it would give them a better attitude about what is going on. If people are actually doing their jobs or doing the best they can.

TD: I think it would make them a little bit more understanding. If they had to do it for a while then they could see what the different pressures and stresses are on the assembly line, because it is a different life. It is a completely different type of work. Would you ever want to be a foreman or have you ever tried to be a foreman?

DD: No, they asked me once back in 1971, and I didn't do it at the time and now I'm glad I didn't.

TD: Why?

DD: Well a couple of years after that they took your seniority rights off of you and it would come back to the union and stuff and if you stayed as a foreman, after that point in time you lost your seniority, for how ever long you were gone, you lost that seniority. I don't like to lose seniority. I have friends who did that and one guy lost about five years seniority. One guy I used to work with who just retired about two years ago, he lost seven years. So as far as retirement goes, it didn't hurt him, but as far as seniority rights in the plant, it hurt him. He had a lot more time than a lot of other guys; actual time but he lost seniority rights in the plant. So these other people who were actually younger than him had more rights than him.

TD: For somebody who might not understand could you explain the importance of seniority rights? What is seniority and how does it help?

DD: Seniority is time you have working for GM in the plant.

TD: Union time, right?

DD: Union time, well plant time or company time. It's not union time it is company time. The union has nothing to do with seniority. They protect your rights as far as getting stuff done for you but they have nothing to do with seniority, it is your time that you have worked for GM. It is important because you can get the better jobs. They put them up for bid and the seniority person gets them. You have more rights than the other people as far as shift preferences and things like that.

TD: How does it work for two people who were hired on the same day and they both bid for the same job?

DD: If they have the same exact seniority, they go by alphabetical order.

TD: By your last name?

DD: Yeah, by your last name.

TD: So with Dunbar, you are a little better off than some other people then?

DD: Right.

TD: Do you feel that, again from management's point of view, do you feel that they are justified in how they treat employees?

DD: To an extent, no. Some of them try to push you because they have the authority, it doesn't work but they try. Some of the younger kids they do push because they don't have seniority and stuff. They'll make them do harder jobs and stuff. If they don't do them they'll fire them or throw them out, because they don't have the union backing them up yet.

TD: Does the union back foremen?

DD: No. The union backs the people, the plant employees. The union will back the people against their foreman if there are problems.

TD: Do you feel that management is fair?

DD: To some extent yes, to others no. Like I said, the way they treat the people, the new hires coming in that are family members of somebody up high they treat them better and give them more chances at stuff. A new hire comes in who doesn't know anybody, they can push them harder. It has gotten a little better since I started there. They keep saying how it is a whole lot better but in my book it's not.

TD: Do you feel that management can be fair to its employees and still be competitive in today's market?

DD: I think they can, because I think if they were then the people would work harder for them and then they might be giving out better products then. If you have people who are upset with you all of the time then they are just going to do their job to get it done, whether it is the best they can do or not.

TD: If you have a person on the line who doesn't want to do their job or are doing something wrong intentionally, how do they handle that? What are the measures that they take?

DD: Well they reprimand them first; they give them a written reprimand. If they keep it up then they'll give them a DLO, which is a day off without pay. The longer it goes, the more it keeps escalating to the fact that you are going to be fired.

TD: How does it work as far as if you have twenty-five years in and you get fired or something like that? Are you able to get your job back with the union at your back?

DD: Yeah, if the union fights you get your job back.

TD: How does that usually work?

DD: Sometimes it takes a week; sometimes it takes a long time. I know people who have been out two or three years before they got their jobs back.

TD: Do you feel that they usually get their jobs back?

DD: Yeah, from what I've known over the years.

TD: Do you think that they should?

DD: Some cases yeah, other cases no. It depends on the severity of what happened.

TD: Do you think the union is always fair? I know that is a tough question.

DD: No, not really because I'll tell you if you are in a clique with the union they'll back you harder than somebody else. Sometimes you don't like the way that they settle stuff. They may settle a grievance for somebody by giving up other grievances. You have to give them up to give the people back their jobs.

TD: Oh really? Does that cause a lot of resentment?

DD: Yeah, especially for the people who had the grievances in, because they didn't get anything settled because they gave them up to give somebody else back their job. If they didn't believe that the person should have got their job back because of what they did, then that upsets them even more. It is just not fair to them, to lose their grievance over someone else.

TD: For someone who lost their job for, I don't know maybe they did something really major, and they did it intentionally and they lost their job. Do you think that the union is pressured to get them back?

DD: Yeah, it is their job, they have to fight for them.

TD: No matter what?

DD: No matter if they know they are wrong they still have to fight for them. That is why you pay union dues, so that you know they'll fight.

TD: What would happen if they didn't fight?

DD: Then the person could sue them for not doing their job.

TD: How would you describe the union's role when you first started at the plant? How do you think they were as far as strength, unity?

DD: When I started there it was really strong. It had only been there for about four years. The union started in 1966 or '67 when they opened the plant. At the time when I went in there in '70 it was pretty strong. The people backed each other and the people on the line backed the union also, more than they do now.

TD: Do you feel there was more of a unified feel, more of a team?

DD: Yeah the team was a lot stronger.

TD: Why do you think that has been lost?

DD: Well I don't know, it seemed like the union was a lot easier to get a long with then. They seem to be hand in hand now more so. They give up more things easier than they used to, but then again the people don't back them up like they used to. I think it had to do with some of the higher ups staying in office too long. They lay back and get their money and then they don't do their job as well.

TD: Do you feel that over the years that union leaders, many men, whatever do you feel that they represent their workers very well? This is like in general over the years, not just right now.

DD: Yeah to an extent they did good. If they didn't people would pressure them and find out why things weren't getting done.

TD: Did you ever feel that they felt they were above the regular labor?

DD: Yeah, I think a lot of them do. The union men don't work a lone, as long as they answer your grievances and stuff they think they're doing their jobs, whether they get anything done right away or not.

TD: How has their role changed over the years? Or hasn't it?

DD: Well their role is about the same.

TD: Do you feel that today with all of the different government laws and OSHA and things like that, do you feel that unions are necessary?

DD: Yeah, I think they are.

TD: You still think they are needed?

DD: Yeah I think they are because you have to have a go between you and the company. You have to have somebody to negotiate your contracts for you, and control them and make sure they are done the way that they are supposed to be. I don't think just anybody could do it; you have to have some background in it.

TD: It's time to wrap it up, what do you feel the future of GM Lordstown is?

DD: It's hard to say. Hopefully we will get another product, if they do I think it'll be there for a while. It's been there for thirty some years now and it's hard to say because they don't usually keep plants around that long.

TD: Do you feel they will get a new product?

DD: I think they will. I think they already do, they just haven't told anybody. That's my opinion. With everything, all the tax breaks that they are getting, where they are centrally located, they have the turnpike and everything right there. They've just got so many things, they've got their own Fab plant and everything. I think they have got so many resources right there that you would almost have to put something there.

TD: Do you have any regrets? If you had it all to do over again, would you do it again?

DD: Yeah, I guess I would. It has been a good life as far as money and all that goes steady work. We had a few times where we had contract problems and we went on strike, other than that I worked steady all of the time. It was a good life, good money.

TD: Is it a place you would want your child working?

DD: Anymore I don't know. The way you see things going wrong, I don't know I really don't want him up there. It would be a good place for him to be as far as money and benefits and everything but the way the attitude has changed around there, with the company and the union, I don't know. I don't know if I'd want him there or not.

TD: Do you buy GM products?

DD: Yes.

TD: Would you buy the car that you build?

DD: For myself, no it is too small.

TD: From a quality stand point?

DD: For quality, yes. I think we make a good car.

TD: Is there anything else, any other stories or anything else that you would like to share? Anything that you feel you could expand on?

DD: No, I don't think so.

TD: Okay well Dave I would like to thank you and I wish you the best of luck.

DD: Thank you.